



CONSTRUIMOS 

CDBG-DR

Citizen Participation Plan

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Change Log		
<u>Version</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Summary of Changes</u>
1	June 14, 2018	Original version
2	September 27, 2018	Updated to include requirements for public comment period and substantial amendments included in 83 FR 40314.
3	August 9, 2019	Updated to include specific strategies to target low - and moderate - income citizens. Updated format and style.

1 Introduction

The Puerto Rico Department of Housing (PRDOH) has developed a Citizen Participation Plan in compliance with 24 C.F.R. § 91.115 and 83 FR 5844 and applicable U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) requirements to set forth the policies and procedures applicable to citizen participation. The requirements outlined in the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development Federal Register Notices, Vol. 83, No. 28 / Friday, February 9, 2018 (83 FR 5844) and Vol. 83, No. 157 / Tuesday, August 14, 2018 (83 FR 40314) supersede/waive and replace certain requirements with respect to citizen participation. The Citizen Participation Plan outlined here is separate and distinct from Citizen Participation Plans utilized for the Consolidated Planning process or non-disaster recovery functions carried out by other agencies in Puerto Rico and is allowed by HUD to differ as outlined in the Federal Register.

According to the Federal Register Notice 83 FR 40314:

"To permit a more streamlined process and ensure disaster recovery grants are awarded in a timely manner, provisions of 42 U.S.C. § 5304(a)(2) and (3), 42 U.S.C. 12707, 24 C.F.R. § 570.486, 24 C.F.R. § 1003.604, and 24 C.F.R. § 91.115(b) and (c), with respect to citizen participation requirements, are waived and replaced by the requirements below. The streamlined requirements do not mandate public hearings but do require the grantee to provide a reasonable opportunity (at least **thirty (30) days**) for citizen comment and ongoing citizen access to information about the use of grant funds."

This Plan is intended to maximize the opportunity for citizen involvement in the planning and development of the Puerto Rico Community Development Block Grant Disaster Recovery (CDBG-DR) program, including but not limited to:

- The amount of assistance expected to be received by impacted communities;
- The range of eligible activities to be undertaken;
- Performance reports;
- Other Action Plan and program activities.

The goal of the Citizen Participation Plan is to provide all of Puerto Rico's residents with an opportunity to participate in the planning and assessment of the PRDOH's CDBG-DR recovery programs. In order to facilitate citizen involvement, PRDOH has coordinated actions to encourage participation and allow equal access to information about the program.

Due to the need for substantial efforts to deploy information, the PRDOH will involve Municipalities, Government Agencies, Non-Profit and Non-Government Organizations as partners to distribute information to citizens, especially those of low and moderate income, those living in slum and blighted areas and in areas identified for recovery through CDBG-DR, and other disadvantaged populations. This includes sending direct

communication to these organizations via email, letter, or in person through stakeholder sessions for further transmittal to their constituents. Direct collaboration with Municipalities, Government Agencies, Non-Profit and Non-Government Organizations as partners is intended to increase residents' access to information and is supplemental to communication between PRDOH and residents. In addition to citizen involvement, PRDOH encourages the participation of regional and island-wide institutions.

2 Applicability

Per 24 C.F.R. § 91.115, the citizen participation plan must encourage citizen participation in the development of a plan, any substantial amendments to the Plan and performance reports. This Plan contains rules and procedures to be followed for citizen participation in activities financed with funding from a CDBG-DR grant, administered by PRDOH, including activities carried out by a local government in accordance with 24 C.F.R. § 91.115(e). The Plan is meant to provide opportunity for participation of all citizens, including those with disabilities or limited English proficiency. It conforms to the requirements of 83 FR 5844 and 83 FR 40314, and any additional special provision established by regulation regarding citizen participation in relation to CDBG-DR grants will supersede what is outlined in this document.

3 Action Plan

Although 83 FR 40314 waived the requirement that public hearings must be held by grantees in order to disseminate information and collect citizen comments, PRDOH opted to host public hearings regarding development of the Action Plan developed in accordance with 83 FR 5844. In addition, PRDOH may choose to host public hearings related to additional Action Plans or substantial Action Plan amendments. If PRDOH elects to hold such hearings, they will be advertised as outlined below regarding public hearings. Public hearings will be conducted for Action Plans or substantial amendments for allocations over \$1 billion.

Action Plan and substantial Action Plan amendments will be posted to www.cdbg-dr.pr.gov to allow an opportunity for public comment for no less than **thirty (30) days**, as required by 83 FR 40314. The posting will also be communicated via e-mail or letter to municipalities, elected officials and others as outlined below.

PRDOH will consider comments on the Action Plan or substantial amendments received in writing, via email, or expressed in-person or at official public hearing events. Additionally, in an effort to permit public examination and accountability, PRDOH will make formal comments regarding Action Plans or substantial amendments publicly available at www.cdbg-dr.pr.gov. PRDOH responses to comments regarding Action Plans or substantial amendments will also be posted to the website.

4 Action Plan Amendments

Any amendments to the Action Plan will be made in conformity with HUD requirements. Non-substantial amendments addressing minor administrative changes will be presented

to HUD at least **five (5) business days** prior to being incorporated into the comprehensive Action Plan. Substantial amendments will be publicly posted at www.cdbg-dr.pr.gov for no less than **thirty (30) days** to allow public input before finalizing and incorporating into the comprehensive Action Plan.

Citizen participation for substantial amendments to the Action Plan will follow this Plan. Changes made via substantial amendments to the Action Plan will be highlighted or otherwise identified within the context of the entire action plan. As required by 83 FR 40314, the beginning of every substantial amendment will include the following:

- A section that identifies exactly what content is being added, deleted or changed
- Chart or table that clearly illustrates where funds are coming from and where they are moving to;
- Revised budget allocation table that reflects all funds

A substantial amendment is defined as an amendment that contemplates one or more of the following:

- Change in a program benefit or eligibility criteria
- Addition or deletion of an activity
- Allocation or reallocation of more than 10% of grant funds

The most current version of the approved Action Plan, including any substantial amendments, will be posted to www.cdbg-dr.pr.gov as a single document. Posting the Action Plan and any amendments as a single document allows the public to view the Action Plan as a single document, rather than the public having to view and cross-reference changes among multiple amendments.

Citizens who cannot access the Action Plan or proposed substantial amendments through the website may request assistance from PRDOH:

- Via telephone: (787) 274-2527
- Via email at: infoCDBG@vivienda.pr.gov
- Online at: www.cdbg-dr.pr.gov/contact/
- In writing at:

Puerto Rico CDBG-DR Program
P.O. Box 21365
San Juan, PR 00928-1365

5 Performance Reports

Program performance reports, such as Quarterly Performance Reports (QPR), will be posted to www.cdbg-dr.pr.gov prior to submission to HUD. Citizens will be provided **fifteen (15) days** to comment on performance reports, as required by 2 C.F.R. § 91.115.

6 Individuals with Limited English Proficiency

Program materials, including plans and program guidelines, will be available in Spanish and English at www.cdbg-dr.pr.gov. For access to program materials in languages other

than English or Spanish, citizens may call 787-274-2527 or send a request via email to infoCDBG@vivienda.pr.gov. Materials will also be disseminated among program partners, including Municipalities, Government Agencies, Non-Profit and Non-Government Organizations to ensure that these materials are accessible locally.

7 Individuals with Disabilities

PRDOH will ensure that program materials and meetings provide for ready access and meaningful participation by persons with disabilities through the use of assistive technology or auxiliary aids as necessary. The Action Plan and other materials on the PRDOH website are provided in accessible formats, including those readable by screen readers to provide accessibility to the visually impaired. For additional assistance:

- Via telephone: (787) 274-2527
- Via email at: infoCDBG@vivienda.pr.gov Online at: www.cdbg-dr.pr.gov/contact/
- In writing at:

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8 Technical Assistance

PRDOH will provide technical assistance in order to facilitate public participation, upon request. Technical assistance provided will be determined based on the needs of the community or individual requesting assistance.

9 Citizen Complaints

Citizens who wish to voice a complaint related to PRDOH's published Action Plan, any substantial amendments to the Action Plan, performance reports, or other issues related to CDBG-DR funded activities may do so through any of the following methods:

- Via email at: infoCDBG@vivienda.pr.gov
- Online at: www.cdbg-dr.pr.gov/contact/
- In writing at:

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PRDOH will provide a timely, written response to all written citizen complaints. The response to a complaint will be provided within **fifteen (15) business days** of receipt of the complaint. Complaints regarding fraud, waste, or abuse of government funds should be forwarded to the HUD OIG Fraud Hotline (phone: 1-800-347-3735 or email: hotline@hudoig.gov).

10 Accessibility of Information

Information related to PRDOH's CDBG-DR grant, including action plans, action plan amendments, program policies and procedures, performance reports, citizen participation requirements, program information, and details of contracts and ongoing procurement policies, will be publicly available at www.cdbg-dr.pr.gov. Program information posted to the website will be accessible and available in both Spanish and English and will be made available in accessible formats, including those readable by screen readers. PRDOH will make information available in alternate formats as needed and upon request to ensure effective communication to persons with disabilities.

The following methods will be used to notify the public of information regarding the CDBG-DR program, including notification of any proposed substantial amendments:

- Notices in print media, such as the newspaper
- Social media announcements
- Radio or television announcements
- Letters or emails to Municipalities, Government Agencies, Non-Profit and Non-Government Organizations
- Notices posted to internet sites, including PRDOH's website
- Other forms of communication accepted by HUD

PRDOH will continue to coordinate outreach meetings with municipalities, government agencies, non-profit and community organizations, faith-based organizations and other interested stakeholders to disseminate information related to the PRDOH Action Plan or substantial Action Plan amendments.

To promote access to information among low or moderate income citizens, PRDOH will organize special orientation events throughout the Island, once the launch of the first CDBG-DR fund program is completed and dissemination initiatives begin. At the same time, PRDOH will distribute informational material through its regional offices and public residential administrators, and strengthen the distribution of news information on the programs through regional media that operate in areas where CDBG-DR funds will intervene. This is in accordance with the Plan's initiatives aimed to strengthen access to information among low or moderate income citizens and members of minority or disabled groups.

11 Methods for Citizen Participation

The following paragraphs describe methods which will be used for citizen participation in relation to the CDBG-DR programs. The methods described in this Plan are not intended to be exclusive of other methods of citizen participation allowed by HUD.

Public Hearings

Although not required by 83 FR 5844 or 83 FR 40314, PRDOH will host public hearings for substantial amendments to the Action Plan contemplating over \$1 billion in changes.

Public hearings will be announced at www.cdbg-dr.pr.gov and in the local newspaper **fifteen (15) days** prior to the date of the hearing. The announcement will include the date, time, and location of the hearing. Public hearings will allow citizens, governmental entities, non-profit and community organizations, faith-based organizations, and other interested parties to receive information on CDBG-DR activities and provide input on CDBG-DR recovery programs and activities.

Public Hearings will be held in locations which are accessible to persons with disabilities, and to the extent feasible at times that are outside of standard business hours. Interpretation services for English and Spanish and sign language will be made available at Public Hearings. Other reasonable accommodations to assist individuals with disabilities will be made available at Public Hearings upon request. Requests for additional accommodations may be made using the communications methods outlined in the Individuals with Disabilities section above.

Communication via the internet

Interested individuals are encouraged to comment at any time by sending an email to infoCDBG@vivienda.pr.gov. Additionally, citizens may comment by using the "Contact Us" tool included in PRDOH's disaster recovery website. The "Contact Us" tool can be accessed directly at www.cdbg-dr.pr.gov/contact/.

Other methods which may be used for citizen participation include, but are not limited to the following:

- Web-based surveys
- Coordination with municipalities, non-profit or community organizations, faith-based or other organizations
- Focus groups or interviews
- Community meetings

This Citizen Participation Plan will continue to be updated as programs progress. Citizen comment is welcome on this Plan throughout the duration of this grant. Please contact PRDOH using the following methods:

- Via telephone: (787) 274-2527
- Via email at: infoCDBG@vivienda.pr.gov
- Online at: www.cdbg-dr.pr.gov/contact/
- In writing at:

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End of Plan.